AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (**Currently Amended**) A method of manufacturing rare-earth sintered magnets, characterized by subjecting an alloy composed of 20 to 30 wt% of a constituent R (R being samarium alone or at least 50 wt% samarium in combination with one or more other rare-earth element), 10 to 45 wt% iron, 1 to 10 wt% copper and 0.5 to 5 wt% zirconium, with the balance being cobalt and inadvertent impurities, to the steps of, in order, melting, casting, coarse size reduction, milling, molding in a magnetic field, sintering and aging so as to form a sintered magnet, surface machining the sintered magnet by cutting and/or grinding, metal plating the surface-machined magnet with a metal-plating metal, then heat treating the metal-plated magnet at 80 to 850°C for a period of from 10 minutes to 50 hours, the metal-plating metal being one or more selected from among copper, nickel, cobalt, tin, and alloys thereof.

2. (**Canceled**)

3. (**Currently Amended**) The ~~rare-earth sintered magnet manufacturing~~ method of manufacturing rare-earth sintered magnets of claim 1 ~~or 2, characterized in that~~ wherein the heat treatment is carried out in an argon, nitrogen, air or low-pressure vacuum atmosphere having an oxygen partial pressure of 10^{-4} Pa to 50 kPa.

4. (**Currently Amended**) A rare-earth sintered magnet ~~composed of~~ comprising:

20 to 30 wt% of a constituent R (R being samarium alone or at least 50 wt% samarium in combination with one or more other rare-earth element)[[,]];

10 to 45 wt% iron[[,]];

1 to 10 wt% copper; and

0.5 to 5 wt% zirconium, with the balance being cobalt and inadvertent impurities, ~~which~~ wherein said rare-earth sintered magnet ~~is characterized by having~~ has a metal oxide layer and/or a metal nitride layer on a surface thereof, ~~either directly or~~ over an intervening metal-plating layer, ~~a metal oxide layer and/or a metal nitride layer~~ the intervening metal-plating layer comprising one or more selected from among copper, nickel, cobalt, tin, and alloys thereof.

5. (**Currently Amended**) The rare-earth sintered magnet of claim 4, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the metal-plating layer and the metal oxide layer and/or metal nitride layer have a combined thickness of at least 1 μm but not more than 100 μm, and the metal oxide layer and/or metal nitride layer has a thickness of at least 0.1 μμm but not more than 100 μm.

6. (**Canceled**)

7. (**Currently Amended**) A method of manufacturing rare-earth sintered magnets, characterized by subjecting an alloy composed of 20 to 35 wt% of a constituent R (R being one or more rare-earth element selected from among neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium, terbium and holmium), up to 15 wt% cobalt, 0.2 to 8 wt% boron, and up to 8 wt% of one or more element selected from among nickel, niobium, aluminum, titanium, zirconium, chromium, vanadium, manganese, molybdenum, silicon, tin, gallium, copper and zinc as an additive, with the balance being iron and inadvertent impurities, to the steps of, in order, melting, casting,

coarse size reduction, milling, molding in a magnetic field, sintering and heat treatment to form a sintered magnet, surface machining the sintered magnet by cutting and/or grinding, metal plating the surface-machined magnet with a metal-plating metal, then heat treating the metal-plated magnet at 80 to 700°C for a period of from 10 minutes to 50 hours,

the metal-plating metal being one or more selected from among copper, nickel, cobalt, tin, and alloys thereof.

8. (**Canceled**)

9. (**Currently Amended**) The method of manufacturing rare-earth sintered magnets according to claim 7 ~~or 8, characterized in that~~ wherein heat treatment after the metal plating is carried out in an argon, nitrogen, air or low-pressure vacuum atmosphere having an oxygen partial pressure of 10^{-4} Pa to 50 kPa.

10. (**Currently Amended**) A rare-earth sintered magnet ~~composed of~~ comprising:

20 to 35 wt% of a constituent R (R being one or more rare-earth element selected from among neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium, terbium and holmium)[[,]];

up to 15 wt% cobalt[[,]];

0.2 to 8 wt% boron[[,]]; and

up to 8 wt% of one or more element selected from among nickel, niobium, aluminum, titanium, zirconium, chromium, vanadium, manganese, molybdenum, silicon, tin, gallium, copper and zinc as an additive, with the balance being iron and inadvertent impurities, ~~which~~

wherein said rare-earth sintered magnet ~~is characterized by having~~ has a metal oxide layer and/or a metal nitride layer on a surface thereof, ~~either directly or~~ over n metal-plating layers (n being an integer such that $n \geq 1$), ~~a metal oxide layer and/or a metal nitride layer~~

the metal-plating layer comprising one or more selected from among copper, nickel, cobalt, tin, and alloys thereof.

11. **(Currently Amended)** The rare-earth sintered magnet of claim 10, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the metal-plating layer and the metal oxide layer and/or metal nitride layer have a combined thickness of at least 1 μm but not more than 100 μm, and the metal oxide layer and/or metal nitride layer has a thickness of at least 0.1 μm but not more than 100 μm.

12. **(Canceled)**

13. **(New)** The method of manufacturing rare-earth sintered magnets of claim 1, wherein the surface-machined magnet is metal plated with a metal-plating metal so as to form a copper layer or a nickel layer, or a multilayer comprising a copper bottom layer followed by one or more nickel layer.

14. **(New)** The rare-earth sintered magnet of claim 4, wherein the intervening metal-plating layer is copper layer or nickel layer , or a multilayer comprising a copper bottom layer followed by one or more nickel layer.

15. (**New**) The method of manufacturing rare-earth sintered magnets of claim 7, wherein the surface-machined magnet is metal plated with a metal-plating metal so as to form a copper layer or a nickel layer, or a multilayer comprising a copper bottom layer followed by one or more nickel layer.

16. (**New**) The rare-earth sintered magnet of claim 10, wherein the metal-plating layer is a copper layer or a nickel layer, or a multilayer comprising a copper bottom layer followed by one or more nickel layer.

17. (**New**) The method of manufacturing rare-earth sintered magnet of claim 1, wherein the metal plating is electroplating.

18. (**New**) The rare-earth sintered magnet of claim 4, wherein the metal plating is electroplating.

19. (**New**) The method of manufacturing rare-earth sintered magnet of claim 7, wherein the metal plating is electroplating.

20. (**New**) The rare-earth sintered magnet of claim 10, wherein the metal plating is electroplating.